

Governor Speaks at U.S. Conference of Mayors 75th Annual Meeting 6/23/2007

MAYOR VILLARAIGOSA: It is now my honor to introduce a governor who is larger than life. He's taken a bold stance in the fight to protect our environment against the threat of global warming. He's joined hands with the leaders of the State Legislature in order to pass an historic bond package that we need to keep the Golden State golden for our children and their children. He's leading decisively to expand health care for the uninsured. He's demonstrating, as I said earlier, that it's not about ideology, it's about ideas. And I introduce him today not just as the governor of the great Golden State of California, I introduce him as my friend, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. (Applause)

GOVERNOR: Well, thank you very much. Thank you, Mayor Villaraigosa, my dear friend, for the nice introduction. It's exactly the way I wrote it, and so thank you very much. And let me tell you something, that I've never enjoyed working with anyone more than with the Mayor. (Applause)

And like he said, it makes no difference, Democrats or Republicans, we work together to do what is best for the people. So thank you very much for your great friendship and partnership.

And it is great to have all of you here. Welcome to California. And you know, we are just doing the budget right now in California. We're a little short of cash, so stay here an extra few days and spend a lot of money, okay? Very, very important. We like that.

But anyway, it's a great honor to be here today at the 75th Annual Conference, and this is a great celebration of course, 75 years to do this conference. And it's great to have you all in Los Angeles. And I want to compliment all of you, because you're doing a fantastic job. You're showing tremendous leadership in the most important issues that are facing America today, whether it is Mayor Bloomberg using the hybrids to create the largest and cleanest fleet of taxis in the world, or if it is Mayor Villaraigosa transforming LA Department of Water and Power to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, or if it is Mayor Coleman from Columbus, Ohio, working on public-private partnerships to rebuild the city. All of those things are absolutely fantastic, and your leadership is important, more important actually than ever before. And I was so happy and so delighted when I found out and learned that you have made climate change the No. 1 item on your 10-point plan to strengthen our nation. (Applause)

Now, by taking action to make sure that the people in your community are doing their part for the environment, you are sending a very powerful message to Washington, and a very powerful message to the rest of the world. This is exactly what we have been doing here in California. Since I have come into office we are continuously proving that you can take care of both the environment and the economy at the same time. So we went on and we started building the Hydrogen Highway, we passed the Million Solar Roof Initiative, the Green Building Initiative, and also the Ocean Action Plan, the Carl Moyer Act, we are putting 25 million acres of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy aside for future generations.

But the two things that we got the most attention for is that we passed a law to cut the greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by the year 2020, and an additional 80 percent by the year 2050. So that means that we are rolling actually back our greenhouse gas emissions to the 1990 level by the year 2020. And the No. 2 thing that we got a lot of attention for is that we ordered a 10 percent cut on the carbon content of transportation fuel, which means that by the year 2020 California is going to use 20 percent less fossil fuel.

Now, do I believe that all of those great standards that we are setting here in California will solve the global warming? No, not at all. But just like you mayors are doing, we are applying leverage, and at some point the whole environmental thing will tip. It's like a see-saw. You walk up to it, and then at one point it will tip the other way. California, as you know, is so big, we are so powerful, and what we do has consequences. As a matter of fact, when you look at the globe, California maybe is a little spot. But the fact is, the power of influence we have on the rest of the world is an equivalent of a whole continent.

And the same thing is true for your cities. That is why I am so proud to be here today with all of you. Together, we are sending the world a message, and what we are saying is basically that we are going to change the dynamic on greenhouse gas and carbon emissions, and that we are taking actions ourselves, and we are not waiting for Washington. (Applause)

California, for example, is partnering, partnering with western states, we are forming partnerships with provinces in Canada, we are forming partnerships with the northeastern states and with countries like Great Britain. I think it's very important that we sign agreements with all of them to make them also commit to roll back their greenhouse gases to the 1990 level. And with your help we are increasing that momentum, and we are moving forward with full speed, I think, which is very, very good, because I don't think that we can afford to waste any more time. I think that global warming is real; it is a huge, huge problem.

As a matter of fact, we can see already the impact it has. We see higher temperatures now, that are being felt everywhere. Beetles that thrive in warmer weather are infesting our forests. Global warming is reducing the snow pack, which means there are earlier runoffs and floods in the spring and less drinking water in the summer. And the severe weather is leading to longer droughts, more intense hurricanes, and deadlier wildfires. And talking about wildfires, we here in California -- normally the fire season starts in the summer or late summer, and we already have experienced devastating fires here in the early spring.

Whether you're facing all of those challenges locally -- we are facing them locally here, while in Washington they are still taking their time and they are not doing anything to act on curbing the greenhouse gas emissions, so we have to put the pressure on Washington to make sure that we can solve those problems together.

And that is what I love about American cities and American mayors. You are the ones that are creating the action. By you working together, you have a tremendous power. You're not sitting around and waiting for someone else to take the lead on those issues; you take the lead yourself, because after all, you're looking at America and you say, what is really the collection that we have that makes America? Well, the collection is really the cities, the counties, and the states. That together makes America, not Washington. Washington is just a little dot on the map. You are making up America. (Applause)

So we don't have to wait for Washington to get on board. No, we are America, and we are taking actions, and we are fighting global warming, which I think is fantastic, because countries like China and India are growing their economies at a staggering rate. And when they look at us, and they see that the United States is actually the worst polluter, they know that we represent only 5 percent of the world population, but they also know that we are emitting 25 percent of the greenhouse gases. How can we inspire all those countries? How can we motivate them to go and to clean up their act? And this is why it is so important what the cities are doing, and what the states are doing. We can expect them and show them that we show leadership and make them make those changes also. So this is why the work that you are all doing is so important.

Now, you know there's a billboard in Michigan that accuses me of costing the car industry 85 billion dollars because of the regulations that we put in place in California. The billboard says: "Arnold to Michigan: Drop dead." But what I'm really saying is, Arnold to Michigan: Get off your butt. That's what I'm saying. (Applause)

As a matter of fact, California may be doing more to save the US automakers than anyone else, because we are pushing them to change, to change if they want to go and sell their cars right here in the Golden State. I mean, let's face it, if they don't change it, someone will. As a matter of fact, South Korea will, China will, Japan will, Germany will. They all will. Now, I believe in American technology, I love American technology. And I believe that the technology in the end will end up saving Detroit, and I think technology also will save the environment. But it is important that we put that pressure on them.

California, for instance, has a car company right now, it's called Tesla Motors. They are producing the Tesla Roadster, and that car is 100 percent electric. Now, that's the interesting thing about it. Here is a car company that has never really produced a car before, and is already producing a car that is 100 percent electric. Now, as you know, Detroit had cars that were electric. Go and look at that documentary that says whatever happened, Who Killed the Electric Car? They can show you what happened. Well, that car, that electric Tesla Motors, I test drove it. It goes from 0 to 60 in 4 seconds, and it drives 135 miles an hour, and it goes 200 miles on a charge, on one charge, and then you recharge it and it only takes 3 1/2 hours to recharge. The car costs 100,000 dollars, and because of the tremendous demand, the next version will be 50,000 dollars, and the next version after that will be 37,500 dollars.

So economics tells you where this is heading, exactly like the cell phones. I remember when I bought my cell phone, the first one, 20 years ago. It was 1,600 dollars. And now, I just bought one for my daughter -- you know, those are the kinds of things that you have to buy immediately for your kids, otherwise they're not happy -- so now I paid 90 dollars for that cell phone with all the gadgets on it. And they're even now lower than that, so that means that the costs have come down, that almost everyone can afford a cell phone.

And the same thing will happen with the environmental technologies on cars. Government can give a push by setting the standards, so California is giving the nation and the world a push. And what's fantastic is that you're all right there with us, working with us. I mean, if you think about it -- and this is extraordinary -- that more than 500 of you have signed the Climate Protection Agreement to meet Kyoto Greenhouse Gas Standards by the year 2012. And I know that took a lot of courage to sign that, but I want to say thank you to all of you, and congratulations for having done such a great job on that. (Applause)

And with each new signature that you gain, you build on that great, great momentum. Now, there are all kinds of great actions that are going on, and I am very enthusiastic about it, as you can tell, that some of the world's biggest companies are also getting on board now and they are defying what used to be conventional wisdom. In other words, capitalism, long the alleged enemy of the environment, is today giving actually new life to the environmental movement. Daniel Jurgens, the famous oil analyst, says that if this all-out activity continues, expect dramatic results. The head of PG&E, California's largest utility, says that the energy industry is on the brink of a revolution.

Well, it's already happening. It's happening right now. Listen to this one: BP, British Petroleum, one of the world's largest oil companies, has just invested 500 million dollars in the University of California's project to develop clean and renewable fuels. Could you ever dream, a year ago, that one of the world's largest oil companies is going to invest in creating clean and renewable fuels? I mean, think about that. There are unbelievable changes happening.

And last month I toured General Electric's Ecoimagination Showroom right here in Los Angeles. And let me tell you something, I learned that their revenues for green clean technology is now topping 12 billion dollars, and their goal is, by the year 2010, to top 20 billion dollars. As a matter of fact, General Electric is selling their plastic business because they say the big profits are now in green, clean technology.

Think about where we are going here. We are growing a whole new economy based on innovation and clean technology that will spark billions and billions of dollars of new investments and create 10s of thousands of new jobs. As a matter of fact, the Wall Street Journal has just said recently that here in California we have a new Gold Rush. Think about that. And this is what's going to happen all over the country. That is the future that I want to embrace, and I know that you want to embrace as well. As a matter of fact, you already have embraced it.

"In a moment of decision," Teddy Roosevelt, one of America's greatest presidents and environmentalists said, "the best thing that you can do is the right thing, and the worst thing you can do is do nothing." So I say, ladies and gentlemen, our actions would make Teddy Roosevelt really proud, because we are doing the right thing. We are the ones that are leading the fight against global warming. We are the ones that are creating an American policy that will inspire the rest of the world to join us and to become partners with us, and we are the ones that will ensure a brighter tomorrow for the people, and a brighter tomorrow for our planet.

Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause)